

# THE BEACON



**Nebraska Emergency Management Agency**

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# CHERRY/KEYA PAHA FUNCTIONAL EXERCISE

## *Multi-hazard scenario tests entire system*

As if a Merritt Dam breach wasn't enough, the dang elementary school had to go and blow up.

Now Cherry and Keya Paha Counties have a little better idea of what to expect should the worst-case scenario come to pass. About 125 participants tested the emergency response system of the counties on January 15<sup>th</sup> in an effort to determine the capabilities of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and to test the warning and evacuation plans along the Niobrara River.



In addition to the bombing of the Valentine Elementary School and the explosion that breached Merritt Dam, the scenario included such elements as a hazardous material spill, traffic accidents, bridge and road failures and the loss of victims in flood waters. The exercise was created and honed over the past year in a series of 18 meetings and the investment of thousands of man hours. Funding for the functional exercise came from Homeland Security grant monies, and direction came from the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and ICF consulting of Fairfax, Virginia.



Play for the exercise was in real time, and went on from 11:30 am to 5:30 pm, utilizing most of the January Saturday. How about lessons learned? Cherry-Keya Paha County Emergency Manager Eilene Brannon said "I thought it went very well. The whole purpose was to test our Emergency Operations Center to see if the facility was adequate and to communicate with the Incident Commander.

"We identified that we needed to make some changes in our EOC," she continued. "We need additional phone lines, backup power, and we

need to make sure we have access to a FAX machine and to the internet. Adequate space was the first thing we identified, though."

Prior to the exercise, Cherry-Keya Paha's EOC consisted of a small meeting room in the Sheriff's Office, but it quickly became evident that the Cherry County Meeting Room would be more suitable, except in the event of a tornado.

DeWayne Morrow, NEMA's Planning, Exercise and Training Coordinator, said "I think, overall, the exercise we conducted in Valentine was the most complex we've seen in the state. Overall, it was the most productive exercise."

"To me, this was a combination of a lot of work, but what we really did was to have a new start point. I believe that the plans are in pretty good shape in the two counties," Morrow said. "I know that Eilene has one of the better training programs in the state. Not only did we do some good things, but it allows us to get better."



## 2005 NEBRASKA SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS POSTER CONTEST UNDERWAY

The springtime severe weather season is quickly approaching and that means it's time for the annual Nebraska Severe Weather Awareness Poster Contest.

The contest, sponsored by Nebraska Association of Emergency Management, the National Weather Service and the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, is part of the annual Severe Weather Awareness Week observance March 28 through April 1.

The poster contest is open to all fourth-grade students in Nebraska public and private schools as well as home-schooled fourth-grade students.

Teachers are encouraged to have their students participate while teaching them about the hazards of severe weather in Nebraska. While not specifically designed to promote tornado awareness, tornadoes are the most common theme chosen for the posters. Lightning and flooding, which are also products of severe thunderstorms, are also good topic choices. .

The first-place winner in the state contest is awarded a \$200 U.S. Savings Bond. The second-place winner receives a \$150 bond and third place wins a \$100 bond. The Nebraska Association of Emergency

Management furnishes all the bonds. The fourth-place poster winner receives a \$50 prize sponsored by the National Weather Service.

Contest rules are as follows:

1. Poster artists must be a fourth-grade pupil in any Nebraska private, public or home school.
2. Entries must be related to the theme of severe weather safety and will be judged on originality, effort and accuracy. All entries must be on an 11" x 17" sheet of white paper. Any medium may be used (crayon, paint, markers, etc.). Only one entry is allowed per pupil and no joint entries (posters by more than one person) will be accepted.
3. Each school is encouraged to conduct the contest. All entries must be delivered to your local emergency management director on or before March 1, 2005.
4. Each entry MUST INCLUDE student name, age, complete home address, home telephone number, name of school, location of school and school phone number on the back side of the entry.
5. Teachers are encouraged to contact the local emergency management director to assist in the selection of the top three (3) entries from their school. If the local director is unavailable or unknown, please contact Mark Meints, Chairman, (402) 223-1305.
6. First-, second-, third- and fourth-place winners will be chosen. All winners will be notified by telephone or mail. Prizes are First Place, \$200 Savings Bond; Second Place, \$150 bond; Third Place, \$100 bond and Fourth Place, \$50 cash. The four winners and their parents will be invited to the State Capitol March 15 for the presentation of their prizes by Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman.
7. Any questions regarding the 2005 Severe Weather Poster Contest should be directed to the local emergency management director or to Mark Meints at (402) 223-1305 or via email at <gagecoema@diodecom.net>.

Deadline for entries to be returned to local emergency management directors is Tuesday, March 1. Posters will be judged during the second week of March by the Nebraska Association of Emergency Management president and representatives from the National Weather Service and the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency. Awards will be presented by Gov. Dave Heineman on March 15 at the State Capitol in Lincoln.

## EMERGENCY ANIMAL SHELTERING WORKSHOP SET

### *Invitation extended to emergency management personnel for March event*

The Iowa/Nebraska Animal Care and Control Association (INACCA) extends an invitation to the emergency management community to attend its annual conference in Omaha, NE March 11-12, 2005.

The Humane Society of the United States will be presenting its Emergency Animal Sheltering Workshop / Exercise. With the experience gained this past year in Florida in the wake of a particularly active hurricane season, the presentation promises to provide a wealth of hands-on information.

Attendees will learn how to set up and run emergency shelters for pets and animals evacuated or displaced from their homes during disasters. In this workshop, they will discuss pet-friendly shelters that accept people with their pets, alternate animal shelters for the pets of displaced people, and evacuated animal shelters.

The course should be of value to animal control workers, shelter staff, shelter volunteers, emergency services workers and disaster responders. The class includes eight hours of classroom instruction and a full-day, hands-on emergency sheltering scenario. Also covered will be community planning, meeting the needs of the animals, logistics, human resources, worker health and safety, administrative issues, legal issues, media/public relations, and closing the shelter once the disaster is over.

The workshop is presented jointly by the Humane Society of the United States, the Iowa/Nebraska Animal Care and Control Association, and the Nebraska Humane Society. For further information, or to register, contact Galen Barrett, INACCA President, 2821 So. 15<sup>th</sup> Street, Council Bluffs, IA 51503-4270, phone (712) 328-4656.

## NEMA CONDUCTS NEHSEEP TRAINING

The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency conducted training January 24-27 to provide guidance in the Nebraska Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program (NeHSEEP). Representatives from Nebraska agencies and jurisdictions gathered for two days of a combination Planning and Management Course and Exercise Evaluation and Improvement Course.

The course was open to all persons with responsibility for managing the Exercise Program within their jurisdiction or agency, exercise and evaluation team leaders, or to anyone with a desire to more completely understand the NeHSEEP process. Those taking the class must have attended Exercise Planning of Exercise Design Team Training, and should be members of their local or state agency exercise planning or evaluation team.

The NeHSEEP combines Nebraska Exercise philosophy with the requirements set forth by the Office of Domestic Preparedness for exercise management and evaluation. The NeHSEEP process must be followed for all exercises funded by ODP with 2004 and future grant funds.

During the course, attendees learned to schedule exercise development activities, develop a comprehensive evaluation process, analyze data collected from exercises, and fulfill After Action Report and Improvement Plan requirements. The class was a hands-on experience involving class participation and facilitated discussion.

## N.E.M.A. ADDS NUMEROUS NEW FACES

*The ever-adapting roster at NEMA shows a number of new players as we stride into the new year. Some are replacements and some are additions, but the agency continues to move forward, adapting to new programs, new emphasis and new directions.*



**Michael Loftis**  
Radiological Systems Manager

**Michael Loftis** Michael Loftis is a new guy in an old position at NEMA. Loftis steps into the Radiological Systems Manager position to take the place of Rich Faulkner, who recently retired after 40 years in that seat.

Raised in Bennington, Nebraska, Mike spent 20 years in the Navy before coming out of the service in 1993. While in the Navy, Mike was a hospital corpsman, served on surface ships and as a corpsman on the Presidential Ambulance, and then moved into the submarine service for 10 years. He spent a total of 13 years as a Radiation Health Officer, equipping him nicely for his current position. After leaving the Navy, he

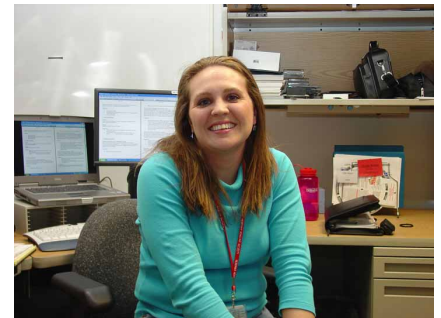
moved back to Nebraska, where he worked as a Hospital Administrator in Plainview and as a medical recruiter. He has Masters degrees in Business and in Public Administration.

He and his wife Diane have two children, Melinda, who is a nurse at Lakeside Hospital and Amanda, who is busy being a teenager.

**Nikki Weber** One of two new Exercise Training Officers at NEMA, Nikki Weber is in her dream position right now. She has been looking at emergency management as the ideal place to be for some time, and now she finds herself in the thick of things in the field.

Nikki graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in May of 2004 with a degree in Criminal Justice and a minor in Communications. A week later she was married to Matt, and less than a year later she's traveling the state, planning, training and exercising and living the EM life.

She and Matt love the mountains, particularly skiing and camping, and share their life with Ikky the Iguana. She's currently shopping for lizard-sized personal protective equipment.



**Nikki Weber**  
Exercise Training Officer



**Kent Studnicka**  
Exercise Training Officer

**Kent Studnicka** The second part of a brace of new Exercise Training Officers, Kent Studnicka lists persistence on his resume. He interviewed at NEMA five times before finding just the right position and signing on as an ETO.

Kent hails from Ord, and has been active in the fire/EMS/response field for 18 years now. He is a paramedic, and is currently working on a master's degree in Criminal Justice.

He moved to Lincoln from Omaha for the NEMA position, and has two children -- nine-year-old Brady and Kaitlyn, 12.

## N.E.M.A. ADDS NUMEROUS NEW FACES *(Continued)*

**Lynn Marshall** The Federal Grants Manager slot at NEMA has gotten a dose of emergency management experience with the addition of Lynn Marshall to the agency roster. The former Furnas County Emergency Manager has been involved in the emergency response area for 27 years, and in emergency management for more than 10 years.

In addition to being a certified firefighter, Lynn's resume includes emergency management certification and experience as a County 911 System Administrator.

In May of 2004 Lynn made the move from Beaver City to Lincoln and employment with state government in order to get out of the perpetually-on-call responder lifestyle and to be closer to children and grandchildren. "Emergency work is a life-long process, and I've invested lots of years," he says. Now he can continue that investment while he and his wife Margie spend time with their children Shane and Erika and their two grandchildren.



**Lynn Marshall**  
Federal Grants Manager



**Kary Schmit**  
PPT&E Staff Assistant

**Kary Schmit** Kary Schmit has a big job cut out for her – keeping track of the large cast of characters in her department in her new position as PPT&E Staff Assistant. She is tasked with supporting the ETOs and the assortment of planning, training, and grants administration folks that make up that area.

She was in the Air Guard for three years in Grand Island before making the move to NEMA. Her expertise is in the area of Information Management, including duties as administrative facilitator for the Commander and the squadron.

Kary also worked for Nelnet in Lincoln, and is currently enrolled in Southeast Community College, working on a degree in networking. When not exercising her brain in the information field, she enjoys dance and all things musical.

**Phyllis Rathjen** Phyllis Rathjen grew up as a farm girl living in an underground house near Garland, but the bright lights and the big city called her to Las Vegas for 19 years. She's returned to Nebraska with her two daughters, Heather, 11 and Elizabeth, 15. In a strange sense of déjà vu, she's back underground now as NEMA's Administrative Staff Assistant.

Phyllis worked for Concordia College and the Kearney Teacher's College, and while in Las Vegas she spent 13 years as the Office Manager for a commercial general contractor. Her move from Las Vegas to Nebraska came on Halloween, the significance of which she is still trying to figure out.

She is now attached to NEMA in a six-month temporary position, but she hopes to stay on with the agency when that stint is up.



**Phyllis Rathjen**  
Accountant I



## **AMERICAN LEGION, CITIZEN CORPS FORM AFFILIATION**

### ***Expands base for Citizen Corps program nationwide***

On January 4, 2005 Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge announced a new affiliation between Citizen Corps and The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary to help raise public awareness about the importance of emergency preparedness and volunteer service. Along with Secretary Ridge, Thomas P. Cadmus, National Commander of The American Legion, and Sandi Dutton, National President of the American Legion Auxiliary, were present to sign the respective agreements.

"The American Legion and the Legion's Auxiliary devote countless hours to serving their country and their communities," said Ridge. "With the help of these two organizations, the Department of Homeland Security's Citizen Corps will expand its efforts to educate, train and prepare all Americans."

Through these partnerships, American Legion Posts and American Legion Auxiliary Units across the nation will assist in developing local Citizen Corps Councils to involve citizens in preparedness efforts. This affiliation will also focus on engaging America's youth in hometown security, elevating Flag Day as a day of citizenship and emergency preparedness, and providing support to Veteran's Affairs Hospitals in emergency preparedness efforts.

At their 2004 National Convention, The American Legion passed a resolution to become an affiliate of Citizen Corps. National Commander Cadmus pledged the continuing commitment of his organization stating, "Supporting the Department's efforts to engage citizens in hometown security is a natural fit for The American Legion. Our members have all seen active military duty defending our country and strongly believe in the mission to be prepared on the home front too." Echoing this sentiment, Sandi Dutton, National President of the American Legion Auxiliary, also expressed her support. "The women of the Auxiliary are committed to improving the welfare of the community by helping all citizens be prepared for any emergency."

Citizen Corps is the Department of Homeland Security's nationwide grass-roots effort that actively involves Americans in making communities safer, stronger and better prepared for all emergencies. The American Legion serves as an advocate for American veterans, a friend of the U.S. military, a sponsor of community-based programs for young people, and a spokesman for patriotic values. With 2.7 million members and nearly 15,000 posts worldwide, the American Legion is the nation's largest veterans group. The American Legion Auxiliary is the largest patriotic women's service organization in the world, with nearly 1 million members. The organization sponsors volunteer programs on the national and local levels, focusing on three major areas: veterans, young people and the community.

For more information about Citizen Corps, visit <http://www.citizencorps.gov>. To learn more about the American Legion, please visit <http://www.legion.org>. For more information about the American Legion Auxiliary, visit <http://www.legion-aux.org>.

## **BASIC, ADVANCED EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ACADEMIES SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 7-11**

### ***North Platte is site for programs***

Both the Basic and the Advanced Emergency Management Academies will be held in North Platte March 7th through March 11th. The Basic Academy is presented to deliver the essential knowledge and skills required to become a successful emergency Management Professional.

In the course of the five-day Academy, those who attend will receive training in the areas of Weather Spotting, Hazardous Materials Awareness, the Emergency Management Profession, Risk Assessment, Grants, the Incident Management System, Emergency Operations Center Operation and Management, and Exercise Planning and Evaluation. The course leads to a Basic Emergency Management Certification

Concurrent with the Basic Academy, NEMA will also present courses for the Advanced Certification Program. Emergency management professionals will spend three days building on and expanding their basic skills.

NEMA's Planning, Preparedness, Training and Exercise will conduct the advanced instruction in three areas: the Incident Management System, Continuity of Operations and Government, and Decision Making and Problem Solving.

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## **NEMERS REPORTS SHOW INCREASE IN EXERCISES**

The Nebraska Emergency Management Exercise Reporting System (NEMERS) records for 2004 showed a large increase in numbers of exercises and people trained for the year.

According to NEMA's records, across the state of Nebraska in 2004 there were 83 orientations, 20 workshops, 31 tabletop exercises, 55 drills, 6 functional exercises, 7 full-scale exercises, and 18 actual events. The resulting total, 220 recorded exercises, was up drastically from 41 recorded exercises in the previous year.

As far as the count of individuals is concerned, 18,453 people were involved in exercises in some way, up from a total of 1,926 the previous year.

NEMA officials encourage all those responsible for exercises in the state to complete and submit NEMERS forms in a timely manner. Those with questions involving the NEMERS process should contact Tonya Smith, Exercise Training Officer, at (402) 416-9818, or e-mail her at [tonya.smith@nema.state.ne.us](mailto:tonya.smith@nema.state.ne.us).

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## **NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE OFFERS SPOTTER TRAINING**

The 2005 Severe Storm Spotter Training schedule is posted at the National Weather Service website. By going to <http://www.crh.noaa.gov/oax/spotter/spottersched.shtml> on the internet, you can view the list of upcoming spotter classes that have been scheduled in the NWS Omaha, NE county warning area. The classes last between 1 1/2 and 2 hours, and provide a basic understanding of thunderstorm structure, spotting techniques, reporting criteria, and procedures. There is no need to register, simply attend a class near your location. Or, if a class has not been scheduled in your county, please feel free to attend a class in a neighboring county at your convenience. Additional classes will continue to be added in the future, so please check back to see if a class has been added for your area. If you have any questions concerning the spotter training sessions offered by WFO Omaha/Valley, please email Brian Smith, Warning and Coordination Meteorologist.